



Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Gordon A. Aoyagi
Fire Administrator

Fire Administrator Gordon A. Aoyagi and **Chief Tom Carr** of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) want you to know that, over the last several days, firefighters have responded to **THREE** significant fires that were caused by children playing with matches or lighters. Fortunately, no deaths or serious injuries have resulted. According to the National SafeKids Campaign children playing with matches and lighters is the leading cause of fire deaths for children ages 5 and under!

Be aware that MCFRS provides a **FREE** comprehensive program – Operation Extinguish – for children who set fires. Operation Extinguish is a model program developed by the MCFRS in 1984 to provide intervention and educational services for juvenile fire setters and their families. The program combines psychological counseling and fire safety education in an effort to eliminate this behavior. In an attempt to prevent future incidents, we offer the below information and safety tips.

PARENTS . . . Let Your Child Know:

- Fire is a tool not a toy that adults use to cook our food or heat our home
- Fire is dangerous and it can kill them or family members
- All fires can spread quickly – it can double in size every 30 – 60 seconds
- Even adults must follow fire safety rules
- They are **NOT** to start fires

Control Your Child's Access to Fire:

- Keep all lighters and matches out of the reach of children by keeping in a safe place, high and out of reach and/or locked up - 2 year olds have shown they can operate a cigarette lighter
- Never leave your stove or any candle fires unattended
- Never leave your fire place unattended when in use
- Teach children to **SHOW (not bring to)** you any unattended matches or lighters they find
- Keep all harmful substances such as gasoline, propane, lighter fluid locked up

Children/Youth set fires for many reasons:

- Curiosity/Experimentation
- Imitating Behavior: Children may imitate their parents or other family members
- Risk Taking
- Peer Pressure
- Crisis: This may be a way to cope or a cry for help due to a recent crisis or trauma
- Cover up an illegal activity
- Anger and/or Revenge

As always; please make sure your home has **WORKING** smoke alarms on each level and sleeping area of your home. Having one in **EACH** bedroom is even better!

Also make sure you and your loved ones **PLAN** and **PRACTICE** a **Home Fire Escape Plan!**

For more information go to www.mcfrs.org or contact Bill Delaney at 240.777.2448 or email: william.delaney@montgomerycountymd.gov

“Together We Can Save Lives And Prevent Injuries”